

1 proliferation of governance structures and partnerships the economic
2 imperatives of neoliberalism are bolstered.

3 Barnett (2010) takes a somewhat sceptical position. He sees in those
4 who proffer neoliberalism as a critical term a degree of moralising over
5 the defects of markets and capital accumulation, similar in kind to the
6 moralising about the benefits of markets and a minimal state by the
7 likes of Hayek and Friedman. Dualities such as public–private, state–
8 market, individual freedom–social justice and profit–social welfare are
9 found to be unhelpful by Barnett since they idealise and impoverish
10 the actual richness and complexity of society and economy. Use of
11 neoliberalism as a purely critical term conceals the potentials in different
12 kinds of liberal thought and the manifest ways that neoliberal urbanism
13 is resisted successfully. This strand of the neoliberal debate is illustrated
14 in a variety of recent research. Several chapters in Leary and McCarthy
15 (2013), and research by Pinch (2015) and Keith (2013) in the London
16 context explain how benefits can accrue to ordinary or disadvantaged
17 people in the face of powerful neoliberal urbanism during processes of
18 urban regeneration. Living in Paris in the 1960s, Lefebvre witnessed
19 first hand the impact of urban planning and what we now call urban
20 regeneration on public space and social groups such as the working
21 classes. What he experienced influenced his ideas about the importance
22 of the social processes that create urban space.

24 **Lefebvre's spatial triad: explication and interpretation**

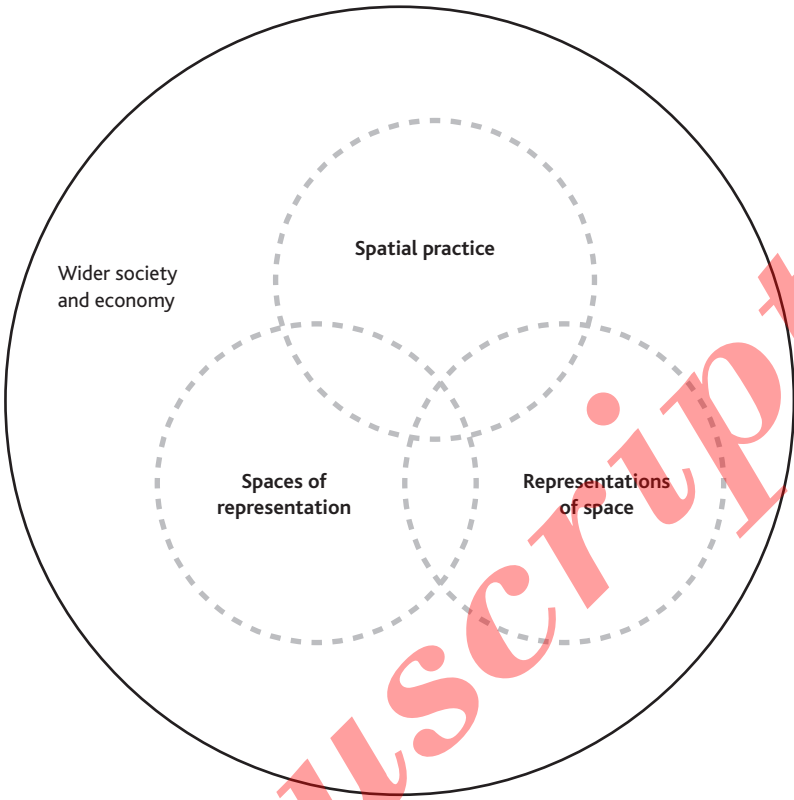
26 Lefebvre conceived his production of space ideas before the advent of the
27 neoliberalism debate but understood well, from a Marxian perspective
28 the problematic nexus of the state and the big corporate private sector.
29 For Lefebvre, this nexus and the power relations of state and big business
30 was the crucial context for the production of space. Lefebvre saw
31 urban space, often regarded as empty and geometric, as replete with
32 social meaning and power relationships which he conceptualised in a
33 spatial triad. Urban space is understood as both outcome and process.
34 Although a neo-Marxist, Lefebvre departed company with Karl Marx
35 regarding the significance of urban space (see Lefebvre's *The Urban*
36 *Revolution*, 2003). Lefebvre stressed the importance of urban space and
37 its production for the maintenance of state regulated and implicated,
38 neo-capitalist society, whereas Marx of course stressed the importance
39 of land more generally, capital accumulation and dialectical struggle
40 between the proletariat and bourgeoisie supported by a complicit state.
41 For Lefebvre (1991) although class politics are important, the focus
42 is on the relative power of those who create official representations

of space and who deploy them to produce and reproduce the built environment. A defining feature of Lefebvre's theories is the importance of power relationships and the linkages between the private sector and the state, for the reproduction of neo-capitalist society. I would add that over recent decades the importance of civil society groups has become also become apparent. Urban space cannot therefore be produced without the formation of coalitions of interest, sometimes disparate coalitions. Although suffused with complexity, the spatial triad does have an intuitive simplicity (see Figure 1.2). The dotted lines represent the porous nature of the three elements allowing their interaction with each other and with the wider society/economy. At the intersection of the three spatial elements, urban public space is produced. My approach sees its elements as follows:

- spatial practice has three major elements: 1) the physical, material city and its routine maintenance; 2) major urban redevelopment in the context of existing neo-capitalist and state power structures; and 3) routines of daily life that conform with official representations of space. It is space directly perceptible through the senses – perceived space.
- representations of space: rational, intellectualised, official conceptions of urban areas for analytical, administrative and property development purposes. They are produced by technocrats: architects, engineers, urbanists and planners but also artists with a scientific bent. They are the dominant representations and may be in the form of the written word, for example in city-wide zoning plans and strategy documents, or quasi-scientific visual representations of various kinds such as maps, masterplans and design guides – conceived space.
- spaces of representation have two major elements: 1) urban everyday space as directly lived by inhabitants and users in ways informed not so much by representations of space as by associated cultural memories, images and symbols imbued with cultural meaning; and 2) emotional, artistic interpretations of city space by poets, writers and painters and other artists. These kinds of space overlay physical space and value places in ways that run counter to the dominant representations of space – imaginative and lived space.

Surprisingly perhaps, the term spaces of representation does not appear in Lefebvre (1991). Nicholson-Smith translated '*les espaces de représentation*' as 'representational spaces'. The term spaces of representation first appeared in Frank Bryant's 1976 translation of Lefebvre's *The Survival of Capitalism* (Borden et al 2001: 25) and is

Figure 1.2: Diagrammatic representation of Lefebvre's spatial triad.



regarded as preferable because the original translation makes the triad 'more difficult to comprehend' (Shields 1999: 161). In addition to the triad, three other Lefebvrian spatial concepts are important for this book:

- abstract space: the urban spaces of state regulated neo-capital characterised by restricted access, restricted performance, commodified exchange value and the tendency to homogenisation.
- differential space: privileges inclusiveness and use value rather than the exchange value of abstract space. It is often transitory space which can arise from the inherent vulnerabilities of abstract space.
- counter-projects: initiatives in the urban environment promoted by civil society interest groups that run counter to official representations of space and are often resisted by city authorities, especially at the time of instigation.

For Lefebvre the production of a new space can never be brought about by any one particular social group and must necessarily result from coalitions based on relationships between diverse groups, which may include 'reactionaries', 'liberals', 'democrats' and 'radicals' (Lefebvre 1991: 380–1). It should be no surprise therefore when space-related issues spur collaboration between quite different kinds of interests and actors. The empirical research to be presented later certainly points to the importance of a variety of coalitions that were vital for the production of urban space. It becomes apparent that Lefebvre understood 'urban social space' to be composed of diverse structures 'reminiscent of flaky *mille-feuille* pastry than of the homogeneous and isotropic space' (Lefebvre 1991: 86). So an appreciation of social and spatial diversity is a key theme in the production of space.

Lefebvre developed his ideas about the production of space and, especially, abstract space while carrying out empirical research in the 1950s and 1960s related to the new town of Mourenx in the south of France. He compared the rapid creation of the new town unfavourably with the slow production of Navarrenx, the historic medieval town in the Pyrenees where he grew up. This unhurried production allowed for the emergence of diverse or differential space. Mourenx was built close to the site of natural gas deposits in order to accommodate the new industrial workforce. Abstract space was created and homogenised here in various ways: land uses, such as residential, leisure and commercial were segregated. Housing and streets were uniform, regimented and bland, and the population lacked diversity. Public space was homogenised also because according to Lefebvre it lacked animation through the performance of social relations in public (Lefebvre 1995). Life in Mourenx was boring in many ways, but particularly because the inhabitants seemed to lack the will to self-organise and resist, at least initially, the harm being done to them sociologically and psychologically by the new town (Stanek 2011: 106–19). Lefebvre was hostile to the new town urbanism that brought Mourenx into being through the collaboration of public and private alliances: the financial sector, big monopolist companies and the state (Stanek 2011: 116) – what I call in this book state regulated neo-capitalism, or just neo-capitalism.

It is evident that Lefebvre's often repetitive and at times convoluted presentation of his spatial triad concept in his book *The Production of Space* was interpreted by what might be called a first wave of urban theorists who engaged stoically with the ideas in the original French. David Harvey first brought Lefebvre's urban ideas, based on his reading of *The Urban Revolution*, to the attention of the Anglophone world

1 with his 1973 book *Social Justice and the City*. Harvey was followed by
2 others who read the French 1974 version of *The Production of Space*
3 (Gottdiener 1985; Soja 1989; and Harvey 1989b). While they had
4 their own particular interpretations, first wave theorists tended not
5 to use the production of space as a framework for empirical research.

6 However, second wave urban researchers did, notably Fyfe (1996),
7 McCann (1999) and Borden (2001). A third wave of writers tends
8 to take a more intensely biographical and hermeneutical approach
9 (Elden 2004; Merrifield 2006; and latterly Stanek 2011). Although
10 there are differences in emphasis, commentators tend to agree that the
11 triad relates to material, represented and lived space, that is, perceived,
12 conceived and imagined space. It is easy to see though how confusion
13 can arise since Lefebvre refers to at least 50 different kinds of space
14 and favours at times a discursive, desultory literary style. None of the
15 above (apart from Borden) engages much, if at all, with Lefebvre's
16 claims regarding the importance of differential space; for them the
17 spatial triad takes precedence.

18 Although Lefebvre's stimulating spatial ideas are at times complex
19 and contradictory, there appears to be only one dismissive critique:
20 Unwin's (2000) well argued, if somewhat polemical, provocation that
21 Lefebvre's ideas are a waste of space. Unwin is particularly scathing
22 regarding the implications 'for our empirical research practice', finding
23 little methodological or empirical merit in Lefebvre's work (Unwin
24 2000: 23). Others disagree in ways elaborated later. Lefebvre is one of
25 the few great 20th century urban philosophers to engage directly with
26 city planning and what we now call urban regeneration albeit that he
27 was rarely complementary. Lefebvre's production of space ideas remain
28 highly relevant for the investigation of city transformation in general
29 and issues of urban social justice in particular (Soja 2010; Harvey 2012).
30 The utility of Lefebvre's ideas for urban planning practice and research
31 has been observed recently in mainstream planning literatures (see
32 Healey 2007; Fincher and Iveson 2008). Although it should be said that
33 the urban theory and urban planning worlds more generally have been
34 perplexingly reluctant to give Lefebvre the theoretical attention his
35 ground breaking insights deserve. In applying a Lefebvrian theoretical
36 framework to a historicised production of space investigation, the book
37 seeks to avoid the danger of producing a caricature of those events
38 which treats history as a form of political propaganda in a larger struggle.